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What can a craftmaster do when an anchor line gets wrapped around both screws of the 65-foot Navy craft he is operating? Not much.

The day probably seemed like any other for the craftmaster and his crew as their boat pulled away from the pier and headed to a local dive site. You can bet, though, if they had known what lay ahead, their operational-risk-management (ORM) radar would have been radiating long before the morning coffee finished brewing. They planned to anchor near a jetty, which usually attracts fish and makes diving more interesting. What they didn't plan was how they would counter the effect that wind and seas would have on their craft.

After arriving at the dive site, they let go the anchor downwind of the craft. Winds were blowing shoreward. The seas immediately took control of the vessel, sending it over the anchor and toward the jetty. When the craftmaster tried to maneuver the boat, its screws became fouled in the line. The boat crew could do nothing but watch the wind and current drive the crippled craft onto the jetty rocks. Divers didn't have enough time to cut away the line.

The divers reported that both shafts were damaged, so the craftmaster radioed for help to remove the vessel from the rocks and to get towed back to the command. A full survey revealed damage to both screws, shafts and running gear, amounting to \$18,000. The craft was out of service for 45 days.

How do you avoid problems like this? By getting back to the basics. Craftmasters must understand the forces that move a craft and be able to use those forces to their advantage. They also must know the maneuvering characteristics of the craft, the effects of propellers and rudders, and the effects of sea and wind conditions.

Shiphandling is an art that can be learned only through experience. Even those who spend years at

sea do not claim to master it. Proficient shiphandling requires constant analysis, study, experimentation, and practice. Because of the variables involved, it is impossible to lay down rules that apply to every situation, but guidance¹ is available.

The Navy knows this and has launched efforts to equip today's Sailors with a tool to protect themselves and their equipment. Operational risk management, or ORM, as we know it, is a new, versatile process for looking at things that's comparable to the multi-function tool seen hanging from Sailors' belts. You could call it multi-vision.

ORM is similar to sunglasses because it cuts out distracting glare during critical evolutions. It resembles a microscope, focusing on details to provide understanding and insight. For an overview, it provides a wide-angle look at the situation on hand, and, like a telescope, it helps plan for what lays ahead. Mostly, though, it's like safety goggles, which keep you from getting poked in the eye by the obvious. ☺
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For More Info...



¹ Anchoring guidance is in NSTM 581 (Anchoring).

A Navy craft lays at anchor as divers and support personnel replace underwater cable and splice in a new section. When the craftmaster and crew in this story tried to anchor their craft, they ran into some costly problems.



Small Craft on the Rocks